Meet retired U.S. Air Force Col. M. D. Eberts, a competitive billiards player with a passion for flying and 30 years of military service to his credit.

For his 94th birthday in April 2013, retired U.S. Air Force Col. M. D. Eberts was treated to a special flight in a home-built plane by family friend and retired Delta Airlines Capt. Jim Averett. Eberts sat in the rear cockpit of the tandem-seat plane, wearing his own Air Force flight suit from his flying days. Recounting the day, he chuckled as his blue eyes sparkled. "Yes, it was made of spare parts and built in Jimmy’s garage, but Jim was No. 1 in his Air Force pilot training class, and I'd flown his wife up in the contraption previously. I was not at all scared."

It was a clear morning when they left the Bulverde-area aviation park. They flew for 30 minutes as Eberts’ son, Randy, and another pilot friend flew alongside in formation. "The experience was awesome," Eberts said. He explained that he had last worn the flight suit when he was stationed at Wiesbaden Air Force Base in Germany, where he was on the staff of USAF Europe headquarters. He departed there in August 1969. Eberts retired a year later at Hamilton Air Force Base in California after 30 years of service.

Eberts went on to recount the decades...
which flew new planes to allies before the start of World War II. After the Dec. 7, 1941, bombing of Pearl Harbor, they took planes to U.S. flying units around the world, and on Sept. 17, 1947, the Army Air Corps became U.S. Air Force.)

Eberts never saw combat. Instead, he pilot-ed 38 different aircrafts on ferrying missions. In the second class of the first twin-engine flight school, he learned six different aircrafts, from the PT-13 Boeing-Stearman two-wing plane, up to the Second Class AT-8 twin-engine plane. His first flight with the ferrying division of air transport command was a four-engine LB-30, the British version of the American B-24 that dropped “liberator” bombs.

A year later, he completed B-24 school and went on to fly B-24 and B-17 multi-engine bombers to overseas destinations. In 1945, near the end of WWII, he flew C-54 air transport vehicles with supplies and troops from Travis Air Force Base outside San Francisco, to Tokyo, with stops in Hawaii, Johnson Island and Guam, and sometimes two-Gima depending on the cargo load. Nonetheless, his favor- ite aircraft was the P-38 twin-engine fighter because of its speed.

In addition to piloting, Eberts progressed through the ranks from second to first lieu- tenant, then to captain, major and lieutenant colonel. In March 1961, he became a colonel during his second tour of Hawaii.

But more than a stellar military career, for 62 years, Eberts was married to Betty Peters, whom he’d met in Long Beach when she was just 17. Then, he was in the pre-war Air Force, he lived with four friends on Ocean Boule-vard and on most days, he had little to do but check for flying assignments at 9 a.m. “And if I didn’t have one, I went to the beach.”

That’s where Peters’ beautiful face and fig- ure caught his attention. “Her name was Eliza-beth, but her mother called her ‘Betty,’ so did, too,” he reminisced. “And though I had to have an escort for our early dates, we married within two years.”

While they moved stations almost every three years, including four different tours in Hawaii and a stint at the Pentagon in D.C., they raised two boys, Randy and Max, who now live in McEwen, Idaho, and San Antonio, respectfully. And Eberts keeps memories of those years in a pocket-size photo album that’s with him all the time.

After, they moved to Sea- pointe, the two moved to Seal Beach, Calif., where they lived for 19 years. But their part, Randy, was stationed at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, and in between visits, “they kept thinking how fresh and beautiful it was in Florida. So in 1991, they sold their Cali-fornia house, hired a contractor and within a year, built a new home on that ocean bay be-tween Pensacola and Fort Walton Beach. They stayed there for 14 years, when sadly, breast cancer took Peters away at age 81.

One year later, in 2006, Randy moved Eb- erts closer, into Independence Hill San Anto-nio. And the place has not been the same since. Bright with pride when asked about winning silver in the Senior Games Billiards, Eberts said until he arrived, no one played. At first, it was just he and another guy, along with Randy and his daughter-in-law, Susanne, playing doubles, but soon, sev- eral of the residents played competitively.

“It’s an extremely nice place here,” Eberts de-scribed. “I have to talk about its founding. The owner visited similar facilities around the coun- try, asking what would they do differently if they could build again. They took notes and built the Best Practices Model here.”

Speaking of best practices, I asked how he has stayed so fit and articulate. “I’m fortunate to be 94,” Eberts pronounced. “I appreciate immensely our Heavenly Father.”

Also, he moves fast. He played tennis until age 80. And now, five days a week, he walks at 3 p.m. “The halls are clear, so I go at a good pace for 45 minutes. Plus, having to pass an annual flight physical in the Air Force kept me in shape most of my life. And one other thing: Betty was a good, healthful cook and one of the very best.”

Writer Deborah M. Martin is making a positive differ- ence in our community with strategic communica-tions, collaboration, lifelong learning and a healthy lifestyle. For more information, you may contact her at dmartincommunications@gmail.com.